

# COLLEGE BOUND ATHLETES

Control and management of intercollegiate athletes is divided between athletic associations and colleges. The athletic associations are made up of colleges that agree to follow the mission, rules and regulations of the association. In this process, athletic associations govern athletic entry and play while colleges govern admissions, and, of course, academic programs. In practical terms, that means that an athlete must be certified eligible to participate in college sports by an association, and be accepted for admission by a college or university. Meeting association eligibility requirements does not meet college admissions.

**The COLLEGE awards athletic scholarships, not the athletic association.**

## THE PROCESS

Both the college and the association establish requirements and rules for entry.

It may differ from one association to another, but basically, students must meet such requirements as:

1. **Graduate from high school,**
2. **Meet core course requirements,**
3. **Achieve a certain level on the Standard Achievement Test (SAT) or the American College Test ( ACT) and**
4. **In some cases, achieve a specific grade point average.**

**Because there is such emphasis on 4-year academic achievement, preparation should start as a freshmen.**

At the same time as preparation in the academic area, **students must achieve on the track or field.** By the Senior year in high school, students are courted by college coaches. (There are rules about that process too.) And, in the Senior year, students start seeking admission, to colleges of interest for both academics and sports. After calls, visits and conversations, college coaches select potential recruits and make offers. Once the student agrees to an offer, a National Letter of Intent is signed during the approved signing periods. The Letter of Intent acknowledges the offer and commits the student to attend the college for one year. (Even though the Letter of Intent is for one year, colleges generally renew each year.) Once the Letter of Intent is signed, other colleges may not contact the student.

It's always important to remember that both athletic and academic success contribute to earning financial assistance. Many college athletic programs work with college admissions to develop aid packages for athletes that combine athletic scholarships with other forms of financial assistance, such as academic scholarships, student loans and work study.

## The Associations

When thinking about college athletics, most people think National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). But the NCAA is one of many associations, each with its own purpose, rules, and requirements. The three most known associations are: NCAA, the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

## The NCAA

The NCAA is the largest association. Student athletic eligibility requirements are different for each division. To learn the differences among the divisions including the number of sports that must be available to both men and women and what division teams they play or to learn what schools are members of the NCAA go to: [NCAA](#). While at the site, check out the [Guide for the College Bound Student](#). This is a must have for learning and understanding the NCAA requirements. It can be viewed or downloaded on the website or requested in hard copy by calling 1-800-638-3731.

There are three major NCAA eligibility requirements : **graduation from high school, successful completion of NCAA approved core courses, acceptable grade point average in core courses and meeting the sliding scale requirements for the grade point average and Standard Achievement Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT).**

Specific requirements are different among the three divisions.

## What Do You Need To Do?

### Grade 9

Verify with your high school guidance counselor and the online core-course listing to make sure you are on track.

### Grade 10

Verify with your high school guidance counselor and the online core-course listing to make sure you are on track.

### Grade 11

Register with the eligibility center. (The NCAA Eligibility Center manages the process for prospective student eligibility including the National Letter of Intent.)

**High School students interested in competing in NCAA athletics must register with the Eligibility Center.**

For more information see [NCAA Eligibility Requirements](#)

Make sure you are still on course to meet core-course requirements (verify you have the correct number of core courses and that the core courses are on your high school's 48-H with the eligibility center).

After your Junior year, have your high school guidance counselor send a copy of your transcript. If you have attended any other high schools, make sure a transcript is sent to the eligibility center from each high school.

When taking the ACT or SAT, request test scores to be sent to the eligibility center (the code is "9999").

Begin your amateurism questionnaire.

### Grade 12

When taking the ACT or SAT, request test scores to be sent to the eligibility center (the code is "9999").

Complete amateurism questionnaire and sign the final authorization signature online on or after April 1 if you are expecting to enroll in college in the Fall semester. (If you are expecting to enroll for Spring semester, sign the final authorization signature on or after October 1 of the year prior to enrollment.)

Have your high school guidance counselor send a final transcript with proof of graduation to the eligibility center.

**Remember Meeting the NCAA academic rules does not guarantee your admissions into a college.**

**You must apply for admission.**

## Taking Tests More than Once

You may take the SAT or the ACT more than one time. Most students take the ACT for the first time in the Spring of their Junior year. Then if they're going to repeat the ACT test they take it again in the Fall of the Senior year. Since there's that score choice option, there's really no disadvantage to taking the ACT test as many times as you think is necessary through your high school career to achieve the score that you're really looking for.

Colleges are going to see the results of every SAT you take, so they'll see every set of scores, but most colleges say they'll either take the highest combined total score from one sitting or they'll mix and match the highest sub score over several sittings. Basically, you want to check with the admissions office of the college that you're interested in and find out their policy in terms of how they look at SAT scores.

**Test score rule: Test scores must be reported to the eligibility center directly from ACT or SAT.**

**High school core-course list: Is yours up to date?**

**Verify the classes you are taking or scheduled to take appear on your high school's approved core-course list.**

**Amateurism questionnaire and final authorization signature:**

**Remember to log back in to your account and finalize your amateurism questionnaire before you enroll in college. If you are beginning school in the Fall semester (August), you will need to complete the amateurism questionnaire and sign the final authorization signature on or after April 1 prior to enrollment. If you are beginning school in the Spring semester (January), you will need to complete the amateurism questionnaire and sign the final authorization signature on or after October 1 of the year prior to enrollment.**

## How Your Core-Course Grade-Point Average is Calculated

The Eligibility Center will calculate the grade-point average of your core courses on a 4.000 scale. The best grades from your NCAA core courses will be used. Grades from additional core courses you took will be used only if they improve your grade-point average.

To determine your points earned for each course, multiply the points for the grade by the amount of credit earned. Use the following scale unless your high school has a different scale on file with the Eligibility Center:

**A – 4 points**

**B – 3 points**

**C – 2 points**

**D – 1 point**

Remember: The Eligibility Center does not use plus or minus grades when figuring your core-course grade-point average. For example, grades of B+, B and B- will each be worth 3 quality points.

### Special High School Grades and Grade-Point Average

If your high school uses numeric grades, those grades will be changed to your high school's letter grades (e.g. A or B). See your high school's grading scale by pulling up your school's list of approved core courses at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net).

Please call the NCAA Eligibility Center if you have questions:

Toll-free number: 877/262-1492

## The NCAA and the NCAA Letter of Intent

The NCAA Eligibility Center defines the Letter of Intent as a “binding agreement between a prospective student-athlete and an institution in which the institution agrees to provide a prospective student-athlete who is admitted to the institution and is eligible for financial aid under NCAA rules athletics aid for one academic year in exchange for the prospect's agreement to attend the institution for one academic year.” **Neither the student nor the educational institution is required to sign a Letter of Intent. But the Letter of Intent helps to solidify the agreement between the parties, and a signed letter of intent ends recruitment by other colleges.** The NCAA specifies time periods when the Letter of Intent can be signed.

Many colleges awarding athletic scholarships do not participate in the National Letter of Intent (NLI) process. While most of the NCAA members are also members of the NLI, some are not. Ivy League, Military Service Academies, Division III Institutions are not members of the NLI. Other organizations not part of NLI are NAIA colleges, preparatory schools and Junior Colleges.

## The NJCAA

The National Junior College Athletic Association or the NJCAA has more than 500 member organizations in the United States divided into three athletic divisions. Its mission is to promote and foster Junior College athletics on Intersectional and National levels so that results will be consistent with the total educational program of its members.” The NJCAA has four provisions for eligibility including graduation from high school or General Education diploma and/or other factors that need to be considered.

See the [NJCAA Prospective Student Brochure](#)

The NJCAA offers financial assistance and scholarships. Many student athletes who don't have grades or test scores high enough to meet the NCAA requirements, start their college career at the Junior College level where they can improve their academic standing while continuing to compete athletically. There are specific requirements for this move and can be found on the NCAA website.

The NJCAA does have a Letter of Intent program. The NJCAA Letter of Intent is used to commit an individual to a specific institution for a period of one year. The form is only valid for NJCAA member colleges and has no jurisdiction over NCAA or NAIA colleges.

**A student is allowed to sign a Letter of Intent with both a NJCAA and a NCAA college without sanction.** The student may not, however, sign a NJCAA Letter of Intent with two NJCAA colleges. If a student signs with two NJCAA colleges, that student will become immediately ineligible to compete in NJCAA competition for the next academic year in any sport.

## The NAIA

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics or the NAIA has nearly 300 member organizations in the United States and Canada. The mission of the NAIA is to “promote the education and development of well-rounded students and productive citizens through intercollegiate athletics.” There is one athlete division for all sports except basketball which has two divisions. Many, but not all of the member colleges, are small private institutions with religious affiliation. While the NAIA members offer athletic scholarships, there are very few full athlete scholarships. Most NAIA members offer combinations of athletic and academic scholarships and other financial aid. See [NAIA Members](#) for more information.

Eligibility requirements for participation in the NAIA include graduation from high school and 1) minimum score on the ACT or SAT,

2) acceptable high school grade point average, and 3) graduate in the upper half of the student athlete's high school graduating class. For more specifics and interpretation of the eligibility requirements see the NAIA [A Guide for the College Bound Student-Athlete](#).

It should be noted that the NAIA eligibility criteria is less restrictive than the NCAA and the colleges have more open entrance requirements.